

The food of gods – *naivedya/nirmālya* in the Pāñcarātrika sources

Marzenna Czerniak-Drożdżowicz
Jagiellonian University, Cracow

The issue of feeding gods is one of the important topics treated in religious texts, for example in those connected with the Tantric traditions of India, such as the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra. The strong belief articulated by these traditions that the god is really present in his earthly representations is the reason for treating him as a real person with natural needs for food, drink, adornments, pleasures, etc.¹ Therefore, the offering of food – especially in India, which frequently faces the danger of famine and where food is a vital issue, becomes a very important subject.

A god needs food, but the food offered to him is not the usual trivial food – it has to be chosen, collected, prepared, and offered to him in a proper way. Then, when it is consumed by the god (which means, when it is touched by him), it contains his energies, which are potentially dangerous. The practice of dealing with sacrificial food is therefore an important and also interesting subject commented upon in the religious literature of the Tantric traditions.

The title I have proposed² suggests that the issue is not only about the food offered to gods, but also about the way this food should be treated if it has already been consumed by them. In fact, just as important is what happens to the food after it has been used in the ritual. The way it is treated is even one of the features which, as we will see, distinguish different religious traditions.

Some research has already been done on the role of food in the context of the mutual relation between god and man, and the role of offerings, including food, as an element of this mutual relation and exchange. Some of the results of such research have been presented for example in the volume edited by Khare.³ Important contributions were made by Brunner and Edholm.⁴ In these works

1. We do not intend to speak here about the dietary habits of the Vaiṣṇavas, which are treated, for example, in Srinivasan 2000, but about the special kind of food which is meant for gods.

2. 'Food of gods', and not for example 'Food for gods'.

3. Khare 1992.

4. Brunner 1969, Edholm 1984.

some consideration was also given to the social and caste aspect – normally, the food, on account of the rules concerning its potential pollution, is accepted from a member of the same or higher social position. However, when it is offered to a god, the situation should instead be compared to the relation between a husband and a wife. In this case, because she is his inferior, the wife cooks for and feeds her husband who is her superior and this seems to be the situation with the food offered to gods.⁵ What is more, the act of offering food also refers to one of its particular features, that is, that the giver ranks higher than the receiver. Therefore, the only way that the god does not place the devotee in a position superior to his own is by reciprocation of the gift of food (*naivedya*) in the form of consecrated food (*prasāda*).⁶ Food distribution was also connected with other social, economical, and even political issues, also discussed by some of the authors mentioned in this article, namely, the matter of the establishment of the links and relations not only between a god and his devotees but also between different groups of devotees and between large temples and the community, as well as the relation between power (kings, landlords, food suppliers) and the community and temple.

The pollution of food concerns cooked food, and such food forms the most part of the offerings to gods, even though high position devotees usually bring raw food (fruit, vegetables), which is not subject to pollution, to the temples. The cooked food for the god is to be prepared by Brahmin priests in the temple kitchen. Although Brahmins do not accept cooked food from strangers, they do accept food that is cooked in the temple and which remains from the offerings.⁷

As pointed out, for example, by Fuller, who conducted his research in the South of India, the principal substances received by devotees in the temples as *prasāda* are sacred ash (*vibhūti*) from Śiva, holy water (*tīrtha*) from Viṣṇu, and red powder (*kuṅkuma*) from the goddess.⁸ However, in some cases food is also distributed and there exists a long theological discussion about who may, or may not, eat Śiva's left-over food (*nirmālya*).⁹ Moreno writes that while Kṛṣṇa's devotees give him food offerings (*naivedya*), whose leftovers are taken as *prasāda*, Śiva's leftovers (*bhojana*) are only eaten by priests. Śiva's other devotees receive the god's washings (*abhiṣeka*) to be consumed. The washings are also known as *pañcāmṛta* (five ambrosial substances), which are milk, curds, clarified butter, honey, and sugar. These substances are used to bathe the god's image in a particular order, namely sugar comes last and removes all effects of oiliness. Only then is the image bathed with pure water.¹⁰ There are also specific

5. See also Moreno 1992, 152.

6. See also Ferro-Luzzi 1978, 86.

7. As regards the dispute concerning this issue see for example Fuller 1979.

8. He also mentions that in some Śaiva temples, particularly in Gujarat, no food offered to Śiva can ever be eaten by ordinary people.

9. See for example Brunner 1969.

10. Kane 1941, 731.

substances, for example, bathing the god in a kind of jelly-like mixture called *pañcāmirtam*, which is offered to the Murugan's devotees belonging to a group of the Tamil Cettiyars.¹¹

The differences between the fierce and peaceful natures of Śiva and Viṣṇu are also visible in the choice of food for them. As Ferro-Luzzi writes, Śiva receives spices and sometimes even green chillies, while Viṣṇu does not receive hot food and never green or red chillies. Pure gods eat vegetarian food, while local, impure village deities may eat meat, which is not offered to them by Brahmins but by other devotees.¹²

Goodall in his article dedicated to Caṇḍeśa,¹³ when referring to several secondary works and especially to Edholm's article,¹⁴ explains *nirmālya* as 'food and garlands that have been offered to Śiva and thereby been imbued with a dangerous power'. As he says, in order to neutralize what has been tasted and abandoned (*ucchiṣṭa*) by Śiva, a fierce and powerful deity is required. In the case of Śaiva tradition this is Caṇḍeśa – Śiva's commander-in-chief, the punisher of transgressions and on whose head Śiva placed his used garland (*nirmālya*) – the remnant from the offering. In the Vaiṣṇava tradition the function of consumer of the remnants goes to one of Viṣṇu's attendants, Viṣvakṣeṇa – the chief of Viṣṇu's army.¹⁵

I have already briefly referred to the issue of the role of food in the Pāñcarātra ritual,¹⁶ and mentioned that although not all Pāñcarātrika texts treat this issue, the manner of disposing of the sacrificial substances is indeed very important for this tradition. As for the Śaiva context, I have already said that Brunner explains that *nirmālya* (remains) are mainly the garlands (*mālya*), which should be thrown away after *pūjā*, but the term also describes the unguents, betel, and food offered to the god. These leavings which are to be used by the devotees are also called *ucchiṣṭa*. In general, sacrificial substances are pure because of their contact with the deity, but they are also dangerous, because the god's power is still present in them after they have been offered.¹⁷ The *Jayākhyasamhitā*, one of the main Pāñcarātrika texts (15.258-259), requires that

11. Moreno 1992. He gives (165) a list of these substances (sometimes more than 5): *virupacci* plantains, unrefined sugar (*carkkaraṇ*), seedless dates (*periccam palam*), raisins (*kismiṣ*), sugarcandy (*kalkantu*), clarified butter (*ney*), and cardamom (*ellakkai*).

12. See Ferro-Luzzi 1977a, and also Ferro-Luzzi 1977b and Ferro-Luzzi 1978.

13. Goodall 2009, 357.

14. Edholm 1984.

15. Goodall 2009, 358; Edholm 1984, 89.

16. Czerniak-Drożdżowicz 2003, 195-96.

17. See Brunner-Lachaux 1968, 272-78. Also G. Bühnemann (Bühnemann 1988, 84-85), on the evidence of the current tradition from Maharashtra, writes that the food offered to the god (*naivedya*) is usually given as *prasāda* to worshippers, the water used for bathing idols (*tīrtha*) is drunk, and flowers (*nirmālya*) are placed on their heads. The leftovers from the offering called *ucchiṣṭa* are used by devotees and by doing this, the devotee participates in and obtains the god's power.

the remnants of the food-offerings should be cast into deep flowing water,¹⁸ and in the chapter on funerary rites (24.54), one can read that all the offerings (*pūjādravya*) up to and including the food-offering (*naivedya*) should be offered up in the fire of the sacrificial fire-pit (*agnau kuṇḍagate*).¹⁹ In another Pāñcarātrika text, the *Paramasaṃhitā*, information concerning the remnants can be found in the chapter on initiation (*dikṣā*). In this case, the worshipper is required to throw remnants away into deep water or to bury them in pure soil far from the road.²⁰ The issue of substances remaining from the offering is also treated in the chapter concerning *dharma* (Chapter 12), as a part of the rules concerning the third part of *dharma*, which is *karma* (deeds, work). *Nirmālya* is defined here as whatever has been employed by worshippers as an offering, and which is therefore unfit for use for any further purpose.²¹

Pāñcarātrika literature offers many more passages from several texts in which references to *naivedya/nirmālya*²² and the various ways of treating them appear.

In the *Viṣvaksenasamhitā* the *nirmālya* is defined as follows:

The food, water, sour milk, milk, clarified butter, honey and molasses,
a mixture of honey and milk, as well as flowers and the mouth-perfumes and
offerings [offerings of mouth-perfumes],
this is known as *nirmālya* which gives me pleasure and which is pure.²³

The texts, however, often warn followers about the dangerous nature of the remnants and inform them what should be avoided. The *Paramasaṃhitā* reads:

One should never step over the remnants from the offering, nor eat [them]
nor touch [them],
one should not give, should not smell but should protect [them].²⁴

18. JS 15.258c-259b: *naivedyam upasaṃhṛtya vastrālaṅkāraavarjitam // agādhodakamadhye tu vahaty adhviniḥśipet /*.

19. JS 24.54: *pūjādravyaṃ samastaṃ ca naivedyāntaṃ hi nārada / upasaṃhṛtya juhuyād agnau kuṇḍagate tataḥ //*.

20. ParS 8.77: *dikṣāvasāne tat *sarvaṃ agādhe* [em. Sanderson; *sarvaṃ samṛddhe* GOS] *'mbhasi niḥśipet / anyatra vā śucau deśe nikhanet pathi dūrataḥ //*.

21. ParS 12.36c-37b: *pūjāyāṃ viniyuktaṃ tu yad dravyam iha pūjakaiḥ // nirmālyam iti vijñeyaṃ sarvakāryeṣu varjitam /*.

22. Edholm (Edholm 1984, 81) writes that the moment which changes *naivedya* into *nirmālya* (or *prasāda*) is *visarjana*, the god's dismissal after the offering. He quotes from the *Agnipūraṇa* 196.14: *arvāgvisarjanād dravyaṃ naivedyaṃ sarvamucyate / visarjite jagannāthe nirmālyanbhavati kṣapāt //*: 'Before the dismissal (*visarjana*) the sacrificial substance (*dravya*) is called *naivedya*. When Jagannātha is dismissed it becomes *nirmālya* instantaneously'.

23. ViṣS 33.7c-8: *annaṃ toyaṃ dadhikṣīraṃ ghṛtaṃ madhu gulaṃ tathā // madhuparko 'tha puṣpaṃ ca mukhavāsopahāraṃ / nirmālyam iti vijñeyaṃ mama prītikaraṃ śubham //*.

24. ParS 3.44: *nirmālyam laṅghayennaiva na bhuñjīta na saṃsprśet / na dadyāc ca na jighrec ca rakṣet (...) ca //*.

The consummation/usage by people of the objects [belonging to] the god and [the usage] of the place etc., O Great Father, is the cause of sin – this is the rule.

The substance which was used here during the offerings by the officiants, this is known as *nirmālya*, which is to be avoided in all acts [rituals].²⁵

These dangerous substances, however, have to be disposed of in some way and, as we have already mentioned, there is a particular means of doing this, namely, they should be offered to Viṣvaksena.²⁶ The *Paramasaṃhitā* mentions this god, one of Viṣṇu's attendants, who is responsible for remnants and to whom they should be given:

In the direction of Someśa (north-east) one should prepare the abode of Viṣvaksena.

Not very far from the enclosure [one should install] the one who keeps the remnants from the offerings to the God.²⁷

A bit further on the *Paramasaṃhitā* adds:

having determined the place for *nirmālya* beyond the outside enclosure²⁸

(...)

having purified the place, having given the vessels and *balī* outside,

having offered to Viṣvaksena the remnants *nirmālya* [garland] and *naivedya* [food],

having sipped [water], together with Vaiṣṇavas and the others, one should eat [the remnants] to the best of one's ability.²⁹

The *Sātvatasamhitā*³⁰ reads that *nirmālya* should, or can, be eaten by the one whose form/body is composed of *mantras*, namely the one who has performed the imposition of *mantras* on his body, which is equal to the creation of the new pure body of *mantras*.

25. ParS 12.35c-37b: *devopakaraṇānāṃ ca sthānādīnāṃ pītāmaha // doṣahetur manuṣyānām upabhoga iti sthitiḥ / pūjāyāṃ viniyuktaṃ tu yad dravyam iha pūjakaiḥ // nirmālyam iti vijñeyaṃ sarvakāryeṣu varjitam /*.

26. In the Śaiva tradition the one to whom the remnants are offered is Caṇḍeśa. An elaborate study about the role of this god can be found in the article by D. Goodall (Goodall 2009); as regards *nirmālya* see especially 356-58. See also Edholm 1984.

27. ParS 19.56c-57b: *someśānāntare kuryād viṣvaksenasya cāspadam // prakāraṣyāvidūreṇa devanirmālyadhāriṇam /*.

28. ParS 27.17cd: *nirmālyasthānam uddīśya bahirāvarenaḍ bahiḥ //*.

29. ParS 27.24-25b: *sthānam viśodhya pātrāṇi balim datvā bahis tathā / viṣvaksenāya nirmālya pūjayitvā nivedya ca // ācāmya vaiṣṇavaiḥ sārddham bhuñjītānyaiś ca śaktitaiḥ /*.

30. In the chapter entitled *pratimāpīṭhaprāsādalakṣaṇam* ('characteristic of the idol, the altar, and the temple'), in the passage dedicated to the description of the acts undertaken by the one who would like to execute the daily ritual.

Having given the full offering (*pūrṇāhuti*), the one devoted to meditation and recitation [of the *mantras*] should conclude the day.
 When the night comes, he, through the *balī* [offerings], should perform the offering satisfying the *bhūtas*.
 He, having the body composed of *mantras*, should eat the rest of *naivedya* [food offering].³¹

This would suggest an initiated devotee and the Śaiva tradition takes a similar position.³²

The *Viṣvaksenasamhitā* reads that the remnants of the food offering can also be given to the teacher:

Sesame seeds, a mixture of honey and milk and the food for offerings,
 without what has been consumed, one should give to the teacher, O Brahman.
 Having collected one fourth [of it] first, he should place [it] in due order.
 One should worship me by offering perfumes, flowers, etc.
 And these remnants which are consumed by him, one should give to the Vaiṣṇavas.³³

The *Pārameśvarasamhitā* reads that the sacrificial food should be duly prepared by the entitled person and then distributed to the devotees:

Even *naivedya* for the [god] present on the [painted] cloth, having taken some from the vessel,
 the teacher himself should take and [he] should even give [it] to the *guru* and others .
 One should give to the teacher and others, together with *madhuparka* and other [substances], the food offering prescribed for the one [the god] present in the main image and the one present in the processional image.
 Then he should undertake the *homa* offering.³⁴

31. SātS 24.67-68b: *datvā pūrṇāhutiṃ dhyānajapayuktaḥ kṣapedahaḥ / nisāgame 'rcanaṃ kuryād balibhir bhūtatarpanam // naivedyaśeṣam aśnīyān mantravinyastavigrahaḥ /*. A similar passage appears in the *Īśvarasamhitā*, 17.64c-66b: *uktadigdvitayasyaikadeśe kuṇḍe 'thavā* [corr.; *kuṇḍetha vā* ed.] *sthale // datvā pūrṇāhutiṃ dhyānajapayuktaḥ kṣiped ahaḥ / nisāgame 'rcanaṃ* [em.; *nisāgamercanaṃ* ed.; see the *Sātvatasamhitā* above] *kuryād balibhir* [corr.; *bhalibhir* ed. see the *Sātvatasamhitā* above] *bhūtatarpanam // naivedyaśeṣam aśnīyān mantravinyastavigrahaḥ /*.

32. See for example Edholm 1984, 84 ; Brunner 1969, 248.

33. ViṣS 33.9-11b: *tāmbulaṃ madhuparkaṃ ca naivedyānnaṃ tathaiva ca / yad bhuktaṃ tad vinā brahman ācāryāya pradāpayet // turyabhāgaṃ hi saṃgrhya samāgre sthāpayet kramāt / gandhapuṣpādīnābhyarcya mām uddīśya nivedayet // tannirmālyaṃ ca tadbhuktaṃ vaiṣṇavānāṃ tu dāpayet /*.

34. PāramS 369-371b: *paṭasthasyāpi naivedyaṃ kiṃcid ādāya pātragaṃ / deśīkaḥ svayam ādadyād gurvādibhyo pi vai dadet // mūlabimbasthitasyāpi yātrābimbasthitasya ca / devasya madhuparkādyaiv naivedyaṃ viniveditam // dāpayed deśīkāḍibhyas tato homaṃ samācaret /*.

The texts belonging to the canon of Pāñcarātra literature are therefore clear about the importance of food in the ritual and also about the possibility or even the need to consume it after the offering. Moreover, sacrificial food also plays an important role in contemporary temple practice. During my field research in South India, one of my informants³⁵ told me that the attitude towards *nirmālya* and *naivedya* is one of the important features which differentiate orthodox Smārta Brahmins from Pāñcarātrikas. The Smārtas dispose of the remnants from the offering by throwing them into deep water, while Pāñcarātrikas distribute them among the devotees.³⁶ In this context Sampatkumāra Bhaṭṭar also mentioned *aṣṭāṅgayāga*, the term which is used in the *Jayākhyasamhitā* to describe the eight levels or elements of the offering, among them *anuyāga*, namely 'secondary offering', offered in the fire of vital breaths (*prāṇāgni havana*). This is executed by the consummation of the food remaining from the offering to the god.³⁷ Therefore, in this tradition, the consummation of the remnants from the offering becomes an element of the established set of ritualistic acts, typical of the Pāñcarātra.

Breckenridge also commented on the special role of food in the Vaiṣṇava tradition, stating that the offerings of food and water are especially significant for Śrīvaiṣṇava worship.³⁸ Ferro-Luzzi presents the whole list of food offerings and ingredients, including the particular sweets and savouries, one comes across in the Vaiṣṇava temples of South India.³⁹ As she writes, it is only in the large temples in Tamilnadu, and mostly Vaiṣṇava ones, that the food offering consists of the regular South Indian meal, which is rice, *dhal* (spiced pulses), *sambar*

35. Mr. Sampatkumāra Bhaṭṭar, the eminent Pāñcarātrika priest from Melkoṭe (see Czerniak-Drożdżowicz 2008, 62-68).

36. The written sources give a slightly different version of procedures (see for example Czerniak-Drożdżowicz 2003, 195-96) and only some offering substances are given to the devotees, for example, flowers or the water with which the image was bathed, while the others should also be thrown into deep flowing water or buried in a clean place, far from the road. Such is the prescript of many Pāñcarātrika texts, for example JS 15.258c-259b: *naivedyam upasamhṛtya vastrāṅkāraavarjitam // agādhodakamadhye tu vahaty adbhiviniṣipet /*; ParS 8.77: *dikṣāvasāne tat *sarvam agādhe* [em. Sanderson; *sarvaṃ samṛddhe* GOS] *'mbhasi niṣipet / anyatra vā śucau deśe nikhanet pathi dūrataḥ //*.

37. The classification of the *aṣṭāṅgayāga* appears in the *Jayākhyasamhitā* 22.74-80ab, and its elements are: 1) *abhiḡamana*, 'approaching', namely the acts which begin with the offering in mind (mental offering – *antaḥkaraṇayāga*), and end with the self-offering (*ātmanivedanam*); 2) *bhoga* namely 'enjoying/using', which is the offering of water *arghya*, flowers, etc. according to the rules; 3) *pūjā*, 'offering' of honey, butter, fat, sour milk or an animal offering (*paśu*); 4) *annena pūjanam* namely 'offering with food'; 5) *saṃpradāna*, 'giving', the offering of cooked food (*niveditasya yad dānam*); 6) *vahnisantarpana*, 'satisfying in the fire' (worshipping deities of the *mantras* with an offering in the fire); 7) *pitṛyāga*, 'offering for ancestors'; 8) *anuyāga*, 'secondary offering', namely offering in the fire of vital breaths (*prāṇāgni havana*) executed through the consummation of the remnants of the food offered to the gods. See also Czerniak-Drożdżowicz 2003, 186.

38. Breckenridge 1986, 30.

39. Ferro-Luzzi 1978, 103-8.

(spiced pulses and vegetables), *rasam* (liquid *dhal*), and curries (spiced vegetables), etc. Furthermore, Viṣṇu in the Keralan Padmanābhaswāmi temple in Trivandrum also receives a full meal. Another similar example is found in the case of the Murukan temples in Palni and Tiruchendur. In the Hanuman temple in Mylapore in Chennai the food is simplified to only rice and *dhal*, while, for example, only rice and *sambar* are offered in the Naṭarāja temple at Cidambaram.⁴⁰ Ferro-Luzzi mentions that the maximum number of meals per day in large temples seems to be seven, but sometimes it is six plus a ‘bed-tea’.⁴¹

The issue of food remnants was also treated in the literature of the broader Vaiṣṇava milieu, for example in the work of the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācārya*, Yāmunamuni (10th–11th century AD) entitled the *Āgamaprāmāṇya*. The text reads that the offerings to Viṣṇu are pure and can be consumed by the *munis*, but if one eats the offerings for other gods, one should purify oneself by undertaking the Cāndrāyaṇa vow:

Viṣṇu’s *naivedya* is declared by the wise men as pure and fit for consumption, [but] having eaten *naivedya* or *nirmālya* of other [gods, e.g. Śiva, etc.] one should perform *cāndrāyaṇa*.⁴²

The [*nirmālya*] touched/purified by the body of Viṣṇu removes sin and is pure.

The man who takes it on his head goes to the highest abode.⁴³

In the later Vaiṣṇava tradition (15th–16th century AD), for example the *Haribhaktivilāsa* of Sanātana Gosvāmī dedicates some parts to the topic of remnants

40. Ferro-Luzzi 1978, 90.

41. Ferro-Luzzi 1978, 91–92 writes: ‘In big temples the maximum number of meals per day seems to be seven, as in the Vaiṣṇava temples of Srirangam and Alakarkoil, in the Śiva temples of Chidambaram and Madurai as well as in the Murukan temples of Swamimalai and Tirupparankundram, all in Tamilnad. In these cases, however, the temple usually indicates six *pūjas* and the equivalent of ‘bed tea’ in the morning or at night often is not counted as *pūja*. A great number of *pūjas* with *naivedya* is not limited to Tamilnad but seems to occur in fewer temples in the rest of South India. *Naivedya* is offered six times in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh; five times in Padmanabhaswami temple of Trivandrum, in the Krishna temple of Guruvayur and in the Śiva temple of Ernakulam, Kerala; four times in the Krishna Mutt of Udipi, South Canara and in Varahanarasimhaswami temple of Simhachala, Andhra Pradesh. In the temples providing several meals a day, there is a tendency to offer a light refreshment early in the morning as well as late at night and to serve the rice and curry meal towards noon, before the temple doors close for the afternoon nap of gods and priests. Where an early morning refreshment is given in Tamil temples it usually consists of cold sweet milk, sometimes accompanied by puffed rice with sugar. At night, when god and goddess retire to their bedroom, they may again receive sweet milk but this time hot’.

42. *cāndrāyaṇa* is a fast regulated by the moon where the amount of food is diminished by one mouthful for the dark fortnight and then increased in the light fortnight.

43. ĀgP, p.166 Gaekwad edition (e-text thanks to Prof. A. Sanderson): *viṣṇos naivedyakam śuddham munibhis bhojyam ucyate / anyat nivedyam nirmālyam bhuktvā cāndrāyaṇam caret // viṣṇudehaparāmrṣṭam mālyam pāpaharam śubham / yas naras śirasā dhatte sa yāti paramāṇaṁ gatim //*

from the offerings to Viṣṇu, among which are the flowers, which should be placed on one's head.

As for accepting the remnants:

One considering it and saying: 'This is the great favour of the merciful God', should place the remnants [of the offering to the God] on one's head.⁴⁴

The text also refers to the *Pāḍmapūraṇa* and reads:

There is a necessity to accept the remnants [of the offerings to the God]. In the *Pāḍma [pūraṇa]*, in Gautama's discussion with the king Ambariṣa [he says]: 'O King Ambariṣa, the one who does not place the remnants of flowers, water or the sandal paste offered to Lord Hari on his head is worse than the one who eats dogs'.⁴⁵

Furthermore, in the *Haribhaktivilāsa*, there is a portion which is entitled *Śrībhagavannirmālyamāhātmya* praising the glory of the remnants from the offering to Viṣṇu, in which the possibility and even the need to use and consume these remnants is clearly stated. The text of the *māhātmya* begins with the following verses:

This is the glory of the remnants [of flowers] offered to the God. In the *Skānda [pūraṇa]*, in Brahma's discussion with Nārada [he said]:

'O Nārada, the one whose body touches the remnants [of flowers] offered to Kṛṣṇa is free from all diseases and sins.

Who purifies his body with the remnants from the offerings to Viṣṇu, [his] sins disappear and diseases gradually go away'.⁴⁶

In other Tantric traditions, for example, in the Śaivasiddhānta, the texts not only speak about *nirmālya* as consisting of flowers and food, but actually differentiate six types, for example, the *Pratiṣṭhāpārameśvara (Prāyaścittasamuccaya* of Trilocanaśivācārya, 12th century AD) enumerates: 1) *devasvam* (divine property); 2) *devatādravyam* (divine materials); 3) *naivedyam* (what has been prepared to be offered to the deity); 4) *niveditam* (eatables offered to the deity); 5)

44. HBh 8.482: *atha śeṣagrahaṇam – tato bhagavatā dattaṃ manyamāno dayālunā / mahāprasāda ity uktvā śeṣam śirasi dhārayet //*.

45. HBh 8.483: *atha nirmālyadhāraṇanīyatā – pādme śrīgautamambariṣasaṃvāde ambariṣa harer lagnaṃ niraṃ puṣpaṃ vilepanaṃ / bhaktyā na dhatte sirasā svapacād adhiko hi saḥ //*.

46. HBh 8.484-485: *atha śrībhagavannirmālyamāhātmyam – skānde brahmanāradasaṃvāde kṛṣṇottīrṇaṃ tu nirmālyam yasyāṅgaṃ sprṣāte mune / sarvarogair tathā pāpāir mukto bhavati nārada // viṣṇor nirmālyasesena yo gātraṃ parimārjayet / dūritāni vinaśyanti vyādhayo yanti khaṇḍasāḥ //*. See also Sathyanarayanan 2012.

caṇḍadravyam (what has been offered to Caṇḍeśa) and 6) *nirmālyam* (what has been thrown away [after having been offered to the deity]).⁴⁷

The *Pratiṣṭhāpārameśvara* speaks about the results of using and consuming forbidden *nirmālya*: by eating it one can become a low-born *mātāṅga*; one who steps over it loses prosperity (*siddhi-hāni*); if one smells it – one becomes a wolf; if one touches it – one becomes a woman, and so on. Some texts say that only repeated initiation can purify one from the sin of conscious eating of the *nirmālya*. Nevertheless, some other texts (Sathyanarayanan mentions the *Vidyēśvarasaṃhitā* in the *Śivapurāṇa*) recommend the eating of the *nirmālya*, since by doing this one acquires identity with Śiva (*śivasāyujya*). Usually, what has come into contact with *liṅga* should be given to Caṇḍeśa and should not be taken by the devotees, but some Śaiva texts state that in the case of natural *liṅgas*, *bāṇa liṅgas*, and the idols made of gems and installed by *siddhas*, Caṇḍeśa does not have the *adhikāra* (authority/right) to receive *nirmālya*. But whenever it is Caṇḍeśa who holds the *adhikāra*, then the consummation of such *nirmālya* is forbidden to the devotees.⁴⁸

From the material presented above, it can be seen that the role of food offerings is extremely important, since, on the one hand, these offerings enable a very special and intimate relation to be established between the devotees and the god. On the other hand, the attitude towards the leftovers from the offerings to gods differs not only in various traditions but also in different texts of the same tradition. Sometimes the scriptures allow their restricted usage and consummation, but the general tendency is to get rid of them in a safe manner, preferably by offering them to a deity specializing in neutralizing their power or by throwing them into deep water.⁴⁹

In general, the remnants from the offerings to Śiva should especially be avoided, while Viṣṇu's *naivedya* is often perceived as pure and even purifying, and, for example, their purifying power is discussed in the *Āgamaprāmāṇya*. Religious texts usually dedicate several passages to the subject, and it seems very important to

47. See Sathyanarayanan 2012 and Sathyanarayanan 2015.

48. Edholm 1984, 83-85 refers for example to the *Śivapurāṇa*, and also mentions (*ibid.*, 87-88) the similarities of Rudra's role as a consumer of the remnants from the offering in the Vedic ritual and Śiva as the consumer, and thus neutralizer, of the by-product of the churning of the milk ocean. As regards the treatment of the remnants of the offerings to gods in the later Vaiṣṇava traditions, for example, the Caitanya movement, one can consult the *Haribhaktivilāsa*, *vilāsa* 8.

49. As Sathyanarayanan mentions (Sathyanarayanan 2012), in the case of the Śaiva tradition, while some texts, for example, the *Merutantra*, prescribe the consummation of the *nirmālya*, others, such as the *Pūrvakāmika*, advise getting rid of *nirmālya* by throwing it into deep water or by giving it to cows. This special faculty of cows, namely the ability to neutralize or take the dangerous effects or powers of the gods upon themselves, can also be observed in Vaiṣṇava temples, where a cow is taken to the temple in the morning to get the first sight/look of the awakened god.

know what could or should be offered, what is counted as *nirmālya*⁵⁰ and what is not, and then, how these different substances should be dealt with after they have been consumed by gods.

50. For example, as mentioned by Sathyanarayanan (Sathyanarayanan 2012), a lotus that has been used once in the offering can be re-used for 5 days, *bilva* for 10 days and *tulsī* leaves for 11 days, provided that they are cleaned/washed.

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